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THE JOYFUL TIDINGS.

BY REV. S. BOYKIN.

Peace, Peace to him that is afar off.—ISAIAH 57 : 19.

I.

For seven long years had the States of North America, amid suffering and sorrow and defeat and death, waged a desperate war against England. Hoping almost against Hope, and struggling apparently against Fate itself, the colonies had continued the conflict until their treasury was bankrupt, until almost every resource was exhausted, and until distress and want stalked boldly through the land.

At length peace came !

Up flew every cap into the air. Loud were the huzzas that resounded throughout the land. The bells rung, the cannons roared, bonfires and illuminations testified to the universal joy, congratulations flowed forth on every side, men grasped each others' hands in mutual delight, and in their eyes glistened the tear of joy. Old men and young men, soldiers and civilians, matrons and maidens, all exhibited the wildest manifestations of satisfaction. You would have thought that such a people never would have been again guilty of the enormity of war. And yet, hardly was a generation laid in their graves, before a second war began between the same powers, and for two years carried ruin and dismay into every household in the United States.

But at length peace came again.

Hear the account of the reception of the news in New York city.

It was late in the evening of February 15th, 1815. In the office of the old Gazette, in Hanover Square, near the corner of Pearl street, three men were seated. As the office was about being closed, a pilot rushed in, and stood for a moment so entirely exhausted, as to be unable to speak.

"He has great news," says Mr. Lang, the Editor. Presently, the Pilot, gasping for breath, whispered intelligibly,

"Peace! Peace!"

The three gentlemen now lost their breath as fast as the Pilot gained his. Directly the Pilot was able to say,

"*A English ship of war is below, with the news of a treaty of peace.*"

Exclamations of rapturous delight burst forth from all, as they rushed into Hanover Square, crying,

"Peace, PEACE, PEACE!"

Up flew the windows on all sides, and no sooner were the inmates sure of the sweet sound of peace than the windows began to glow with brilliant illuminations. Through the city and at the top of every voice spread the cry,

"Peace, PEACE, PEACE!"

No one stopped to inquire about "free trade and sailor's rights." No one even inquired whether the national honor had been preserved. Enough it was that the ruinous war was over—this was the great joy that stirred every breast and spread from bosom to bosom, from house to house, from street to street, until the entire city was in a blaze of delight, and reverberated again and again with the glad shout,

"Peace, PEACE, PEACE!"

II.

Nearly fifty years have rolled around, and we of the South have taken up arms to resist just such tyranny as our forefathers resisted—an unjust government. Our opponents are the same people who, in conjunction with us, successfully repelled the efforts of England to subjugate them. Both by sea and by land they are pressing upon us with a power that would appal any but those determined to be free. Eight hundred thousand warriors, armed as warriors never were before, are bearing down upon us in legions apparently invincible. Iron-clad boats, armed with the most formidable implements of destruction, threaten speedy demolition to all opposition.

Upon our coasts hover numberless ships freighted with those who are raging for blood. Three millions of men are waiting to be called into the field, that they may move upon us in phalanxes sufficient by their very weight to crush us to the earth. Already five hundred thousand human beings have been immolated upon the altar of war. Two hundred thousand hearts that once beat high with hope and joy and love, are now hushed in the grave; two hundred thousand as noble men as ever walked the earth, now slumber in death—a holocaust to liberty; while from a million of households constantly ascends the wail of anguish. The mourning cry of the widow and orphan may be heard all over our land. Every breeze is burdened with the meek murmur of want, with the sad sigh of suspense, and with the low moan of suffering. From every quarter come up tales of horror and demoniac rage; fire, pillage and outrage blacken the annals of the day; while continued threatening and slaughter, are breathed out by our infuriated foes. War is, indeed, a horrible thing!

How welcome will be peace! Peace that will bring an end to all these horrors; peace that will lift from our land the cloud of anguish

and suspense; peace that will sheathe the sword and silence the cannon and quiet all fear and banish all dread; peace, that will bring bright prosperity with all its glorious train, and cause our land to smile with gladness; peace, that will light up the sky with the roseate beams of hope, and fill the land with joy and happiness; peace that will insure our liberty and safety, and give us an honorable place among the nations of the earth!

O PEACE is a glorious thing!

When it comes, ah, how we will appreciate it! How rapturously will we sing in its honor! And how loth will we be ever again to disturb its quietude and its joy!

The sweetest word in all our language will then be, *peace*. No effort will be spared in order to secure it; no sacrifice will appear too great in order to retain it forever. God grant that soon all hearts may be gladdened by the joyful sound, *Peace*!—that every lip may sound it forth in rapture, and every mountain and vale resound with the echo, PEACE, PEACE!—that from every valley and plain and hill-top and mountain peak, amid universal rejoicings, may ascend the loud chorus,

PEACE! PEACE! PEACE!

III.

Earthly peace is indeed a boon of inestimable value; but there is a peace far transcending it in importance and estimation, and one in which every man, woman and child should be inconceivably more interested than in a peace with earthly enemies, and that is—*peace with God*.

To the unconverted there is a *necessity* for this peace; for they are naturally in a state of enmity against God. They were brought into that state by the sin of Adam, but, alas, by their own sinful acts, they have widened the breach to a fearful extent. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom. 8: 7.) And, by "wicked works," sinners not only continue to maintain their attitude of "alienated and enemies in mind," (Col. 1: 21) but daily they grow worse and worse in their feelings, and by their sinful actions they exasperate him more and more each hour.

Sinner, beware. "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. If the wicked turn not, God will whet his sword. He hath bent his bow and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death. He ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors." (Psalms 15: 11—15.) As Judge of the world—as Governor of the world, God—the sin-hating God—is your enemy. He must wage war with you.

And, with God for your enemy, what, O sinner, what can you do? In matching your strength with an angry God, can you, dare you hope for victory? "Do you provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are

you stronger than he?" (1 Cor. 10: 22.) "He is wise in heart and mighty in strength, who hath hardened himself against him and hath prospered?" (Job 9: 4.)

In a struggle with one who is infinite in wisdom and in power, what chance is there for you to gain the victory?

Omnipotent, can he not crush you?

Having power over all agencies, can he not overcome you?

When God is your enemy, sickness, the bullet, the sword, the beasts of the field—everything is your enemy. (Hosea 2: 18. Job 5: 22, 23.) Not in all creation have you one efficient friend; how, then, can you be safe?

Unreconciled to God, there is for you but one end to this contest, and that is *certain defeat*—everlasting misery, woe and despair.—And at any time, God may say, "Cut him down, why cumbereth he the ground?" (Luke 13: 17.) Ah, sinner, all this binds you up to the *necessity* of making your peace with God. Let me, then, in all friendliness, ask you if it is not wise to make peace with the Almighty? In a contest with an adversary *so powerful*, is it not wise to count the cost of a continued struggle?

IV.

Let us see what risks you run in continuing your warfare with Jehovah:

1. You run the risk of God's withering, blasting curse, which will turn all your joy into sorrow, and all your enjoyments into the blackness of despair. "The curse of the Lord *is in the house of the wicked.*" (Prov. 3: 33.) "Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store—cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation and rebuke in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly—because of the wickedness of thy doings whereby thou hast forsaken me." (Deut. 28: 17--20.)

2. You will put a blockade upon all the mercies of God. For you, while an avowed and determined enemy to God, there can be no grace, no pardon, no peace of mind. From you can ascend to heaven, so as to be heard, no supplication, no sigh for relief. Within your breast a gnawing conscience will rage furiously, and to you rest will be an utter stranger. "There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God." (Isa. 57: 21.)

3. Your soul will be lost—forever lost. And if such be the case, of what avail will be all the pleasures and acquirements of earth? "For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Matt. 16: 26.) "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world and lose himself, or be cast away? (Luke 9: 25.)

Thus unconverted reader, the war you are carrying on against Jehovah will result in irremediable, hopeless, endless *defeat*. Forever and ever—even while God is God—will he continue to punish those who, on earth, warred against him and were defeated. They not simply rejected his offers of mercy, but they spat upon those offers; they not simply spurned the gift of a mediator, but they trod under foot the son of God; they not only counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, but they did despite unto the Spirit of grace. With eternal vengeance will God continue to torment them. "For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received a knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of punishment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace. For we know him that hath said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." (Hebrew 10: 26---29.) "The Lord shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ—who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." (2nd. Thess. 1: 7---9.) "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the living God." (Heb. 10: 31.) Consider, O sinner, what thou art doing! Life and death are set before thee. Continue to wage war with God, and you are lost forever. While he is extending the arms of forgiveness, make your peace with him, and all will be well. He himself says to the obstinate, endangered sinner, "*Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall be at peace with me.*"—(Isaiah 27: 5)

V.

I hear you ask, in dismay,

"*But what is peace with God?*"

Peace with God is a *deliverance from sin*, on account of which we are at enmity with God and God with us. It is sin that defiles our whole nature—our words, our thoughts and our deeds; and hence, every act we perform is an act of sin or rebellion against God and his holy law. For sin is a violation of God's holy law, and is proof of such a rebellious spirit as would dethrone the Almighty and reign supreme in his place, if the power to do so were not wanting. Therefore, "God is angry with the wicked every day." (Psalm 7: 11,) and he will surely overwhelm them with defeat and punishment—"the adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces—out of heaven shall he thunder upon them." (1st Sam. 2: 10.) "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish

shall be upon every soul of man that doeth evil." (Rom. 2 : 9.)

"The Lord is a man of War," (Exodus 15 : 3,) who can cope with him? He has but to speak the word, and thou, poor sinner, wilt be blasted to everlasting destruction. Thou mayest well tremble for thy safety whilst unreconciled to God. Arise and make thy peace with him!

But you inquire *how* you can make your peace with God!

Now, in order to be at peace with God, you must get rid of sin.—Can you get rid of sin in reality? No. *But you can get rid of the guilt of sin*, which amounts to the same thing, as far as escape from eternal punishment is concerned.

You ask, *How can I get rid of the guilt of sin?*

I answer, *Only by being pardoned by the Almighty.* But will the almighty pardon the sins of those whom he declares he will punish on account of their sins, and whose punishment his justice *demands*?

Yes; for the sake of Jesus, "who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world." (Gal. 1 : 4.)

"We are reconciled to God by the death of his Son." (Romans 11 : 15.) "God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ."—(2 Cor. 5 : 18.) "It pleased the Father that in Christ should all fullness dwell, and, (having *made peace* through the blood of his cross,) by Him to reconcile all things to himself—you hath he reconciled." (Col 1 : 19—21.) Christ bore the punishment of our sins, and thus made it possible for God to become reconciled to us and forgive our sins. "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him." (Dan. 9 : 9.) "The blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanseth us from all sin." (1 Jno. 1 : 7.) I see a ray of hope animating your face, and you ask,

Did Christ really bear my punishment and prepare a way for pardon and peace?

Yes, listen to me! "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53 : 5.) "The Son of man came to give his life, a ransom for many." (Mark 10 : 15.) "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity." (Titus 2 : 14.) "He was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification." (Rom. 4 : 25.) "Christ died for us according to the Scriptures." (1 Cor. 15 : 3) "For when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly—God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet *sinner*s Christ died for us:" (Rom. 5 : 6—8.)

The way, then, for reconciliation with God, is open through Christ's atonement. By that atonement the law and justice are satisfied, and all obstructions to peace and friendship toward sinners, on the part of God, are removed. He may mercifully forgive them and receive them into his favor, upon their believing his word, receiving this atonement or reconciliation, and relying upon it alone,

as a sufficient satisfaction for their sins. "He that believeth shall be saved." (Mark 16: 16.) "All the prophets give witness unto Christ, that through his name whosoever *believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*" (Acts 10: 43.) "For by grace are ye saved through faith." (Eph. 2: 8.) To *believe* is to trust in the merits of Christ's atonement as a sufficient satisfaction for our sins, and to rely upon that and that alone for our salvation. "Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; and in him shall the Gentiles trust. Now the God of hope fill you with all *joy and peace in believing*—that ye may abound in hope." (Rom. 15: 12, 13.)

This *believing* is the *faith* which God requires, as the only terms upon which he will grant pardon and peace. It is a trusting reliance upon the shed blood of Christ as a sufficient ground to hope for forgiveness, since God has said that he is willing to forgive sins for the sake of Christ's sufferings. And when a soul thus trusts, then God is gracious unto him and saith, "Deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom." (Job 33: 24.) God becomes his friend and pardons his sins, or, in other words, holds him *guiltless*; and thus it is that "the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin." (1 Jno. 1: 7.) Thus it is that we secure *peace* with God. "Therefore, being justified *by faith*, we have *peace with God*, through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5: 1.) And thus it is that we attain to everlasting salvation. "Being now justified by his blood we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." (Rom 5: 9, 10.)

VI.

Thus it is that the soul, resting by faith on the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, is brought into a state of PEACE WITH GOD.

And for you, O war-worn sinner, I can, therefore, bring "GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD NEWS!"

Peace is declared—peace between God and man. The Almighty is satisfied, as by the death of his Son, he has triumphed over Sin and Satan, and his Son ascending on high, has led captivity captive, and, a mighty Conqueror, sits at the right hand of the Father to intercede for you as soon as you lay down your arms of rebellion. O sinner, will you not repent, and, by trusting in Jesus, take Him for your Saviour, and thus accept of Peace with God?

PEACE WITH GOD! Ah, you know not the meaning of that phrase. It means being at peace with the King of kings and Lord of lords—the mighty Potentate of heaven and earth, in whose hands is all power, and who, by a word, can consign you to everlasting torment. It means that God will be your friend, Christ your advocate, and angels your ministering spirits. It means that the Powers of Hell will not be able to prevail against you—that not for you will

the lake of fire and brimstone toss its heaving billows of flame. It means that not for *you* will death present its fearful horrors; that not for *you* will the judgment be clothed in terror; that not for *you* will eternity be shrouded in black; that not for *you* will be the weepings and wailings of eternal damnation.

Peace of Conscience will be yours—that joyful, blissful frame of mind which the world cannot give nor take away.

Your soul will feel safe: all doubts and fears will be forever silenced—a blessed calm will take possession of you, and you will be enabled to “draw near to God with a full assurance of faith, having your heart sprinkled from an evil conscience.” (Hebrews 10: 22.)

Happiness will be yours; joy will illuminate your heart; the sun of Hope will light up your pathway brilliantly before you; the bright gates of Heaven will stand invitingly open to receive you; and the long, unending ages of eternity, freighted with inexpressible bliss, will be yours forever and forever.

VII.

And now, reader, in the name of High Heaven—with a full consideration of the value of your immortal soul—with a knowledge of the certainty of death—with the sound of crashing worlds in my ears—in view of Him who appears in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God—with the sight of firmaments melted with fervent heat and gathered together and rolled away forever—and with an endless eternity swelling out before my view, and echoing and reechoing with yells of despair, I ask, *Are you at peace with God?* And if not, let me say that all things urge you to make your peace with him. God in his anger, Christ in his love; the law in its fierceness, the Gospel in its kindness; justice with clarion voice, mercy in beseeching tones; the angels in amazed wonder, the just made perfect in solicitude; the warning pains of fell disease, the hollow sound of falling clods; every tolling bell and each freshly moulded grave; each setting sun and every closed eyelid; the Sabbath morn, the preacher's voice and every falling leaf, all, all, admonish you to make your peace with God, ere it be too late.

Your lost companions, howling in unendurable, yet endless torments, send up the never ceasing alarm, *Make your peace with God!*

Flitting Time, as it passes by on rustling wings, whispers; *Make your peace with God!*

Pallid Death, in awful tones of fearful warning, exclaims, *Make your peace with God!*

The cold, silent grave, in sepulchral notes, ejaculates, *Make your peace with God!* The Judgment, in tones of thunder, reverberating along the vaults of eternity, peals forth the same sound, *Make your peace with God!*

Hell, with its groans and horrors, its woe and everlasting despair, echoes, in tones of piercing anguish, *MAKE YOUR PEACE WITH GOD!*

And Eternity—long, unending eternity, with a wailing, swelling, fearfully distinctive reiteration, utter the solemn words, *MAKE YOUR PEACE WITH GOD!*

VIII.

Oh, if eternal happiness depends upon the decision of an hour; if it be man's one great duty to flee from the wrath to come; if heaven and hell are realities, I ask you, sinner, if you should not *prepare to meet your God?* When all the joys of earth fade and grow dim before the glory of Heaven; when compared with the bliss of eternal life, fame, honor, wealth, pleasure, power, influence and self-gratification all sink into nothingness, is it not wise to pause in your mad career, and begin at once your preparation for eternity? O sinner, pause, lest mercy's arm weary of ringing her warning bell! Pause, lest Love cease her melting calls, and say, *let him alone!* Pause, lest Justice grasp the glittering sceptre and hurl the avenging thunderbolt. Pause, lest hope spread wider her lethal pinions and take an everlasting flight. Pause, lest *Despair, o'er thy lost and ruined soul, in triumph wave forever her black ensign of woe!*

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